



PUBLIC HEALTH ADVISORY: Legionellosis (Legionnaires' Disease)

July 16, 2013

Franklin County Public Health and Columbus
Public Health

What you need to know

Franklin County Public Health (FCPH) is currently investigating a legionellosis outbreak associated with the Wesley Ridge Retirement Community, located at 2225 Taylor Park in Reynoldsburg.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) are also assisting with the investigation. As of Tuesday, July 16, 2013, a total of 14 cases are confirmed. The age range is 63-99 years of age. There has been one death.

The first case was reported on Tuesday, July 9, 2013, so the cases have all occurred in a very short period of time. Of the 14 confirmed cases, one is an employee, one is a visitor and the remaining are residents or in the adult daycare program.

Ongoing Investigation

FCPH, CDC and ODH are working together to complete case interviews and investigations as well as patient chart review. The data is being compiled and reviewed to see if a common source can be determined.

The Wesley Ridge Retirement Community has followed all recommendations to limit additional exposure to their residents, employees and visitors. They have hired a contractor to test their environmental systems and remediation has begun.

The CDC has also collected over 80 samples from the environmental systems to do their own testing too. Those preliminary test results are not expected until the end of the week from the CDC.

What to watch for

People usually develop symptoms within 2 to 10 days of exposure to the bacteria, including:

- Fever, chills
- Cough, which may be dry or may produce phlegm
- Muscle aches, headache
- Tiredness, loss of appetite
- Pontiac Fever is a milder form that includes fever and muscle aches, but without pneumonia.

Symptoms of Legionnaires' disease are similar to other types of pneumonia, so other tests are needed for diagnosis. Chest X-rays can find the pneumonia caused by the bacteria, and other tests can be done on sputum (phlegm), as well as blood or urine to find evidence of the bacteria in the body.

Who is at risk

Anyone can develop Legionnaires' disease, but the illness most often affects middle-aged and older persons, particularly people who smoke or have other lung problems. Also at increased risk are persons whose immune system is weakened by diseases such as cancer, organ transplants, diabetes or AIDS. Pontiac fever most commonly occurs in persons who are otherwise healthy.

Legionnaires' disease can be very serious and can cause death in up to 5% to 30% of cases. Most cases can be treated successfully with antibiotics, and healthy people usually recover from infection.

Transmission

The Legionella bacteria are found naturally in the environment, usually in water. The bacteria grow best in warm water, like the kind found in hot tubs, cooling towers, hot water tanks, large plumbing systems, or air-conditioning systems of large buildings. They do not seem to grow in car or window air-conditioners.

People get Legionnaires' disease when they breathe in a mist or vapor (small droplets of water in the air) that has been contaminated with the bacteria. One example might be from breathing in the steam from a whirlpool spa that has not been properly cleaned and disinfected.

Persons may be exposed to these mists in homes, workplaces, hospitals, or public places. More illness is usually found in the summer and early fall, but it can happen any time of year. Legionellosis is not passed from person to person.

What you can do

Treatment

Healthcare providers should perform *Legionella* urine antigen and *Legionella* culture of respiratory specimens (sputum or bronchoalveolar lavage [BAL]) on patients presenting with pneumonia symptoms. Respiratory specimens should be plated on *Legionella*-specific agar or should be frozen and stored if the agar is not available.

All clinical *Legionella* isolates must be saved for further testing at the CDC. Please call the Infectious Disease Reporting System (IDRS) at **614 525-8888** for questions regarding specimen testing and reporting.

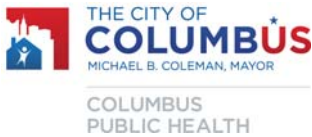
To learn more

CDC *Legionella* Information for Clinicians:

<http://www.cdc.gov/legionella/clinicians.html>

For additional information on this Legionellosis outbreak, contact FCPH at **614 525-3097** or IDRS at **614 525-8888**.

What is this? [Learn more about this emergency notification system.](#)



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